

Family to Family Key Elements Team Decision Making

➤ Strategy	Team Decision Making
➤ Goal	To involve birth families and community members, along with resource families, service providers and agency staff, in all placement decisions, to ensure a network of support for the child and the adults who care for them.
➤ Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child deserves a family • Every family needs the support of the community • Public child welfare agencies need community partners
➤ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group can be more effective in decision making than an individual. • Families are the experts on themselves. • When families are respectfully included in the decision making process, they are capable of identifying and participating in addressing their needs. • Members of the family's own community add value to the process by serving as natural allies to the family and experts on the community's resources.
➤ Key Elements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A TDM meeting, including birth parents and youth, is held for ALL decisions involving child removal, change of placement, and reunification/other permanency plan. 2. The TDM meeting is held BEFORE the child's move occurs, or in cases of imminent risk, by the next working day, and always before the initial court hearing in cases of removal. 3. Neighborhood-based community representatives are invited by the public agency to participate in all TDM meetings, especially those regarding possible child removal. 4. The meeting is led by a skilled, immediately accessible, internal facilitator, who is not a case-carrying social worker or line supervisor. 5. Information about each meeting, including participants, location, and recommendations, is collected and ultimately linked to data on child & family outcomes, in order to ensure continuing self evaluation of the TDM process and its effectiveness. 6. Each TDM meeting resulting in a child's removal serves as a springboard for the planning of an "icebreaker" family team meeting, ideally to be held in conjunction with the first family visit, so that the birth-foster parent relationship can be initiated.

Family to Family Key Elements Self Evaluation

➤ Strategy	Self-Evaluation
➤ Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a comprehensive baseline perspective on agency performance using the nine Family to Family outcomes. • To create a capability for determining how changes in agency policies and practices, especially those related to key Family to Family strategies, are affecting those outcomes.
➤ Values	<p>Self-evaluation is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focused on outcomes; • carried out by a diverse team of child welfare managers and staff, neighborhood partners, and private providers; and • supported by the investment of human and other resources in acquiring technical expertise in analysis and data management.
➤ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal data that capture the experiences of all children served by the child welfare agency provide the most reliable estimates of where the agency stands on the outcomes emphasized by Family to Family. • The responsibility to use data to understand agency and provider performance is shared by all staff and is not just the job of data managers and analysts.
➤ Key Elements	<p>Self-evaluation seeks to enhance data resources and to develop an ongoing process for using data to help make policy and practice decisions.</p> <p>Data Resource Key Elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop within 6 months a longitudinal database that describes baseline performance relative to Family to Family outcomes; • Establish a process for updating the baseline database every 6 months after the initial baseline is established; • Develop indicators that allow analysis of whether: (1) siblings are placed together; and (2) children are placed in their own neighborhoods; and • Work with strategy teams to develop process data that track the implementation of key strategies, with appropriate benchmarks identified for each strategy. <p>Self-Evaluation Process Key Elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a self-evaluation team (SET) representing three key perspectives—frontline (agency staff and community partners), data management, and analysis; • Develop a concrete and well-defined linkage between the SET and top management so that managers act to reinforce self-evaluation; and • Establish a regular schedule for SET meetings and adjust agency participants' assignments to accommodate their commitment to self-evaluation efforts.

Family to Family Key Elements Building Community Partnerships

➤ Strategy	Building Community Partnerships
➤ Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish relationships with a wide range of community entities in neighborhoods where referral rates to the child welfare system are high; to collaborate with those groups around the issues of child safety and permanence; with an initial goal of establishing a strong network of neighborhood foster care; followed by the development/support of neighborhood resources and services to protect children and support families. • To reduce the overrepresentation of African American children, other children of color and poor children in the child welfare system.
➤ Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children belong in families; families need the support of their neighborhoods. • Public systems cannot protect children and provide them permanency alone.
➤ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships between the public child welfare agency, grassroots communities, and private providers can create an environment that supports families involved in the child welfare system. • Connecting families to neighborhood and community sources of support strengthens them and enhances their ability to care for their children. • A network of family foster care that is neighborhood-based, culturally sensitive, and located primarily in communities in which children currently live will accelerate reunification or other permanency plans. • The public child welfare agency recognizes distinct groups as community partners—including grassroots organizations and entities, contracted providers, faith based entities, and placement providers
➤ Key Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public child welfare agency selects a respected community person, who is a champion of the values of F2F, to act as the Community Partnership Strategy Group chairperson. (S)he has a clear and strong vision for the development of the agency/community partnerships. This person may be from the community or from inside the agency. • The task of the Community Partnership (CP) Strategy Group is to assist the agency director in orienting all agency staff on the community based-vision for resources, placement, and permanency for children. The CP group helps the director

➤ **Key Elements,
continued**

dialogue with the broader community.

- CP recommends that community partners participate on all four F2F strategy work groups along with the public child welfare agency staff. Implementing the four strategies together is critical to the success of F2F.
- *Self-Evaluation-* Baseline data for the 9 F2F outcomes is shared with community partners to initiate meaningful dialogue for the partnership. Child welfare data on specific targeted neighborhood children and families, foster/adoptive resources, & kinship care will be helpful for the community to understand the plight of families from their communities.
- *Team Decision Making-* As TDM is implemented, a process is created for families to invite whom they want to the TDM. Community Partner representatives are present at all TDM meetings. A tracking tool is developed to measure attendance by community and its impact on outcomes.
- *Recruitment and Support of Resource Families and Birth Families* - Consistent recruitment and support of resource families in the targeted neighborhoods is ongoing. Family Team Meetings, where foster families and birth parents are introduced, will be supported and promoted in the CP strategy group.
- The public child welfare agency has earmarked funding for contracts with grassroots community for the implementation of child welfare activities in targeted communities.

Examples:

- Establish family visit sites in community.
- Distribute neighborhood foster care recruitment material throughout community.
- Hold child welfare supervisor/worker unit meetings in community.
- Hold foster parent orientation/training in community.
- Establish foster/relative support at community site.
- Develop neighborhood resource/services guide for workers, birth families and resource families.

Family to Family Key Elements
Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families

➤ Strategy	Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families
➤ Goal	To assure that children who cannot be protected in their own home will be placed with a safe and stable family from their own neighborhood.
➤ Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child deserves a family. • Every family needs the support of their community. • Public child welfare agencies (PCWA) need community partners.
➤ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are strong, nurturing, neighborhood families who will step forward to care for those children who cannot be protected in their own homes if we inform the community of the need and provide our resource families with adequate support. • It takes every staff member of the public child welfare agency, and all of our community partners, to participate in the support of resource families in order to build trust and to create an adequate safety net for the families who are the front line of protection for children in out-of-home care. • Families and youth are experts on themselves and can serve as valuable partners and consultants in training and developing both resource families and PCWA staff. • Decisions about all phases of the recruitment cycle (recruitment, development and support) will be based on the local data gathered in tracking prospective resource families and the experience of children in out of home care.
➤ Key Elements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruitment <i>begins with support</i>. It starts with meeting the needs of the current resource families. 2. Recruitment is <i>a system of neighborhood based out-of-home-care</i> in order to reduce the trauma of placement for children. 3. <i>Neighborhood partners actively assist in recruiting and supporting resource families</i> in their own neighborhood in order to increase the accessible services and supports for neighborhood children and families. 4. <i>Resource families work with social workers and birth families to achieve reunification or another permanency goal</i>. 5. <i>There is a change in the culture of the public agency</i>. Administrators, social workers and support staff reflect confidence and commitment to the value of placing <i>all</i> children with safe and stable families; they demonstrate respect for resource families in their work and they implement the philosophy that “recruitment is everybody’s business”. 6. <i>The policies and promotions at the public child welfare agency reflect the agency’s commitment</i> to develop partnerships with community organizations, with neighborhood collaboratives, with birth families and with resource families. 7. <i>Resource families participate in policy and placement decisions</i>. They are trained, supported and informed about all meetings related to the child in their care and policy development 8. <i>Training for new and experienced resource families is relevant, participatory and accurately describes the experience of resource families</i>. It is accessible geographically and culturally. Foster youth, birth and resource families function as co-trainers sharing their experiences and their lessons learned.